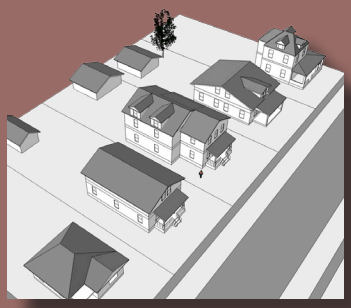
Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods



City of Boulder

Consulting team:
- Winter & Company
- Code Studio
- RRC Associates
- Urban Advisors

Framing the Question

Preliminary Working Report

December 10, 2008

The Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods project was initiated by the Boulder City Council in response to concerns with potential impacts of additions and new construction in the city's established residential neighborhoods.

The project will be conducted in four steps. The first step, which began in September 2008, was intended to frame the question. It was guided by an initial problem definition adopted by City Council. Public feedback on the initial problem definition has helped to more clearly define the issues that the community seeks to address. These issues provide the foundation for a refined problem statement that will direct a recommended strategy to promote compatible development in single-family neighborhoods.

This report provides a general summary of the first step in the Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods project and presents the refined problem statement. The next step will include a recommended strategy to address the problem statement. In the third step, specific regulatory tools will be developed to promote the recommended strategy. Implementation of the tools will be the final step in the project. Members of the community will have an opportunity to participate and provide feedback during each step.

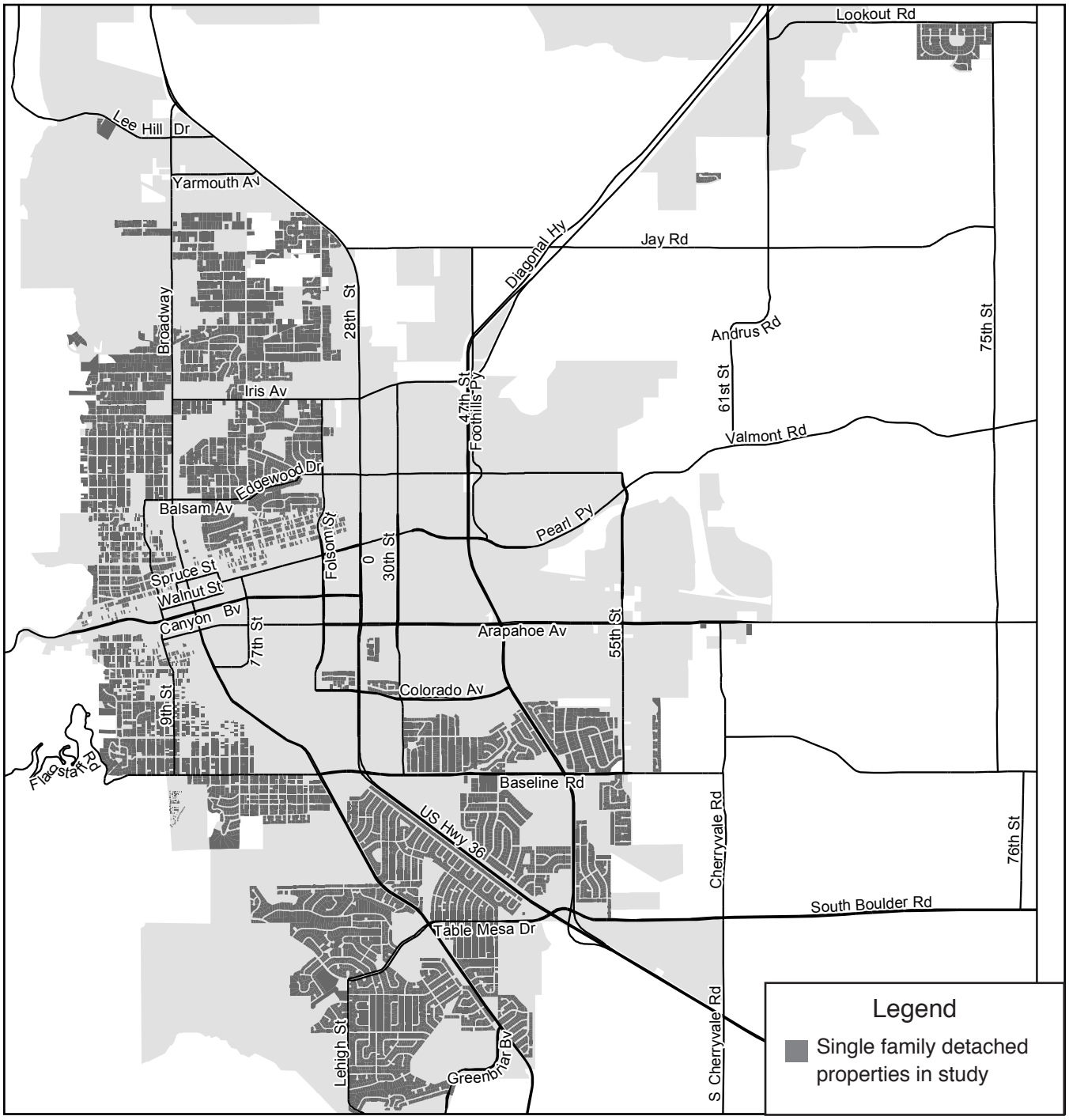
The problem statement and recommendations herein are based on a review of the current zoning code, existing neighborhood characteristics and public feedback. Community outreach included a series of public workshops and interest groups as well as a survey mailed to all single-family property owners within the project area.

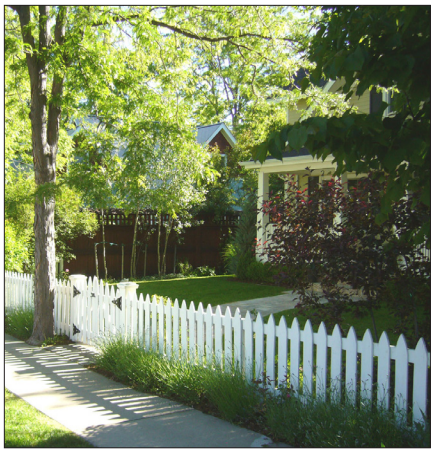
Comments received will inform the recommended strategy. A strategy report will describe a range of general options and specific regulatory changes related to the refined problem statement with the end of promoting compatible development in single-family neighborhoods.

Project Area

The project area includes single-family detached homes the following residential zoning districts:

- Residential Estate (RE)
- Residential Low Density 1 (RL-1)
- Residential Low Density 2 (RL-2) not including Planned Unit Developments
- Residential Mixed Density 1 (RMX-1) not including multi-family development
- Residential Rural 1 (RR-1)
- Residential Rural 2 (RR-2)





Existing conditions in Boulder's diverse range of single-family neighborhoods may influence the perceived compatibility of new development.

Part 1: Summary of Existing Conditions

Existing conditions in the city's single-family neighborhoods include both physical and regulatory characteristics as well as current development trends. These conditions help shape development and may influence its perceived compatibility. They provide important background for the refined problem statement described in Part 2 and the forthcoming recommended strategy report.

Existing Neighborhood Features

Both qualitative and quantitative features define the city's existing single-family neighborhoods. Members of the community identified a number of mostly qualitative features that help to define their neighborhoods. Extensive quantitative or statistical information on existing conditions is archived in the city's Geographic Information System (GIS). Additional statistical information is available from the Boulder County Assessor.

Community Identified Neighborhood Features

As part of the project's public outreach process, members of the community helped to identify and describe features of different neighborhoods and areas throughout the city. These features include quiet streets, a sense of stability and a sense of consistency or diversity in the built environment. Commonly identified features are summarized below.

Areas with Different Street Patterns, Topography or Other Framework Features

Participants identified features such as wide curving streets in Table Mesa, long north-south blocks with east-west lot orientations in Old North Boulder, narrow gridded streets with alleys in Mapleton Hill and consistent lot sizes in University Hill. Participants also noted that sloping topography and varied lot shapes are features of some parts of Table Mesa, University Hill, Mapleton Hill and Newlands.

As part of the project's public outreach process, members of the community helped to identify and describe both qualitative and quantitative features of different neighborhoods and areas throughout the city.

Areas with Different Site Features

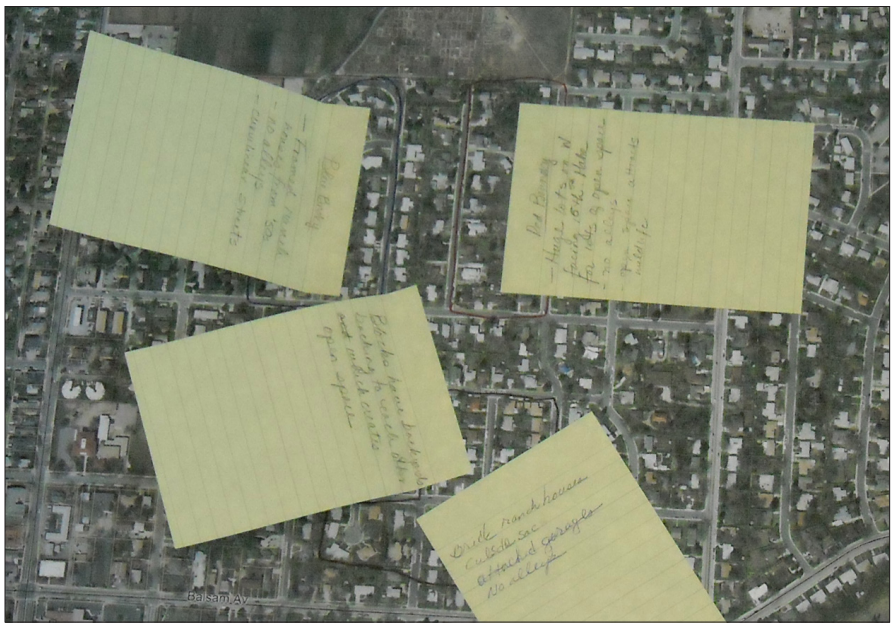
Participants identified a number of site features that help to define different neighborhoods such as consistent front yard setbacks in Newlands and Old North Boulder, alley accessed parking in Mapleton Hill and Newlands, and front or side yard parking areas in Martin Acres and Old North Boulder. Participants frequently noted landscape and open space patterns such as mature trees and landscaping in Mapleton Hill, large backyards in Old North Boulder, modest landscaping in Newlands and diverse landscaping in Table Mesa.

Areas with Different Building Features

Participants identified building height, diversity or consistency of building size and style as well as presence or lack of additions and new construction as being among the defining building features of different neighborhoods. Some participants noted defining features such as diverse, mostly one-story building forms in Old North Boulder, a high number of additions in Mapleton Hill, unique custom homes in Table Mesa, uniform architecture of one to one-and-a-half (split-level) homes in Martin Acres and a mix of old and new houses, remodels and infill in University Hill.

Statistics on Neighborhood Features

The city's GIS database and County Assessor's records may be used to identify existing features such as lot sizes, open space patterns, building floor areas and setbacks. The Existing Regulations section beginning on page 5 includes lot size summaries for each of the zoning districts in the project area. The table on page 12 provides additional statistical summary information on existing building sizes and building size trends.



Workshop participants used maps to identify and list characteristics that helped to identify different neighborhoods, areas or contexts in the city's single-family neighborhoods.

Existing Regulations

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan establishes general land use policies for the city and surrounding (primarily rural) land within the county. The zoning code establishes the basic use and dimensional requirements for additions and new construction in single-family neighborhoods. Locally designated historic districts such as Mapleton Hill are also subject to the requirements of the city's historic preservation ordinance.

Zoning Districts

The zoning districts that apply within the project area are briefly described below and summarized in the table on page 10. Because the Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods project has been defined to include only single-family properties, specific land use and density standards are not described.

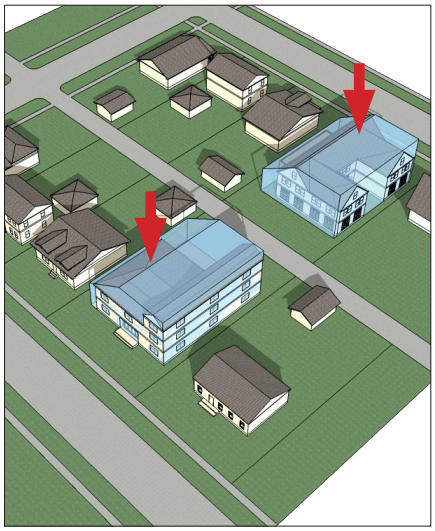
Residential - Rural 1 (RR-1)

This zoning district applies primarily to areas that are near the edges of the city, including several areas north of Iris Avenue and some areas within southeast Boulder. The district's 30,000 SF minimum lot size is intended to help maintain a rural character. The district's dimensional standards are similar to the RR-2 district, but the side setback standard is greater.

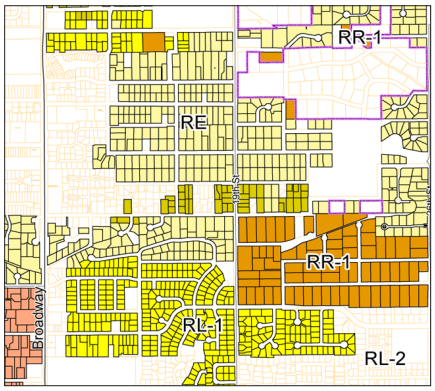
Residential - Rural 2 (RR-2)

Like the RR-1 district, this zoning district applies mostly to areas that are near the edges of the city including some areas north of Iris Avenue. The district's 30,000 SF minimum lot size is intended to help maintain a rural character. The district's dimensional standards are similar to the RR-1 district but the side setback standard is lower.

Just over 55% of lots in the RR-1 and RR-2 districts do not meet the existing 30,000 SF minimum lot size standard. Nearly 5% of lots are 10,000 SF or less.



Current regulations define a three dimensional building envelope on each lot. The new construction shown above illustrates what could be built within the building envelope on two sample lots in the RL-1 zoning district.

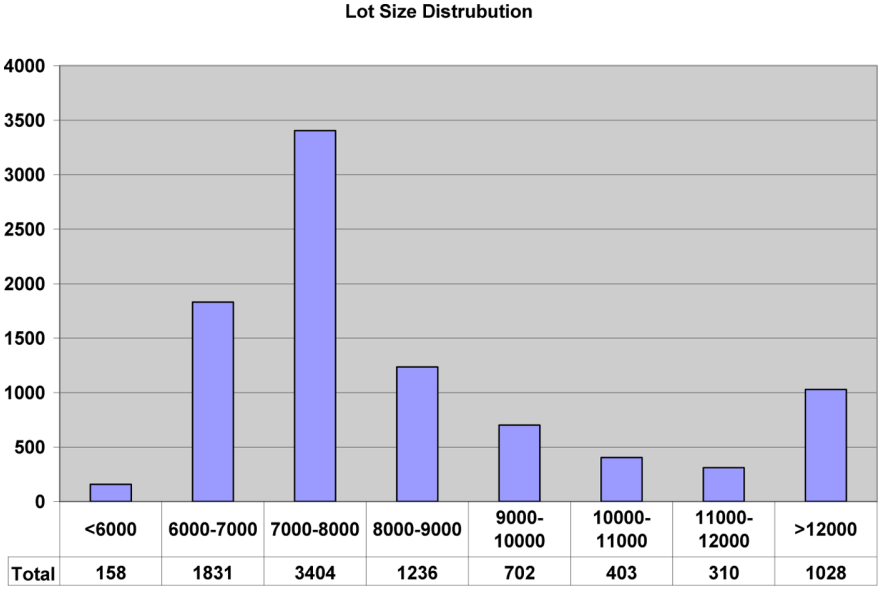


A variety of existing residential zoning districts apply in some parts of North Boulder.

Residential - Estate (RE)
This zoning district applies to portions of neighborhoods throughout the city including areas within north Boulder, southeast Boulder and central Boulder (near Chautauqua). The district's 15,000 SF minimum lot size is intended to help maintain a rural character. Its dimensional standards are similar to the RR-1 district, but has a reduced side setback standard.

Nearly 60% of lots in the RE district do not meet the existing 15,000 SF minimum lot size standard. About 50% of lots are between 10,000 and 15,000 SF.

Residential - Low 1 (RL-1)
This zoning district applies to a diverse array of neighborhoods throughout the project area from Newlands to Martin Acres and portions of Table Mesa and Gunbarrel. The district applies to the majority of single-family homes in the city. It is the only single-family residential district with an existing floor area ratio (FAR) regulation (The ratio of built floor area to the size of the lot. A one story building covering an entire lot or a two story building covering half of a lot would both have an FAR of 1.0).



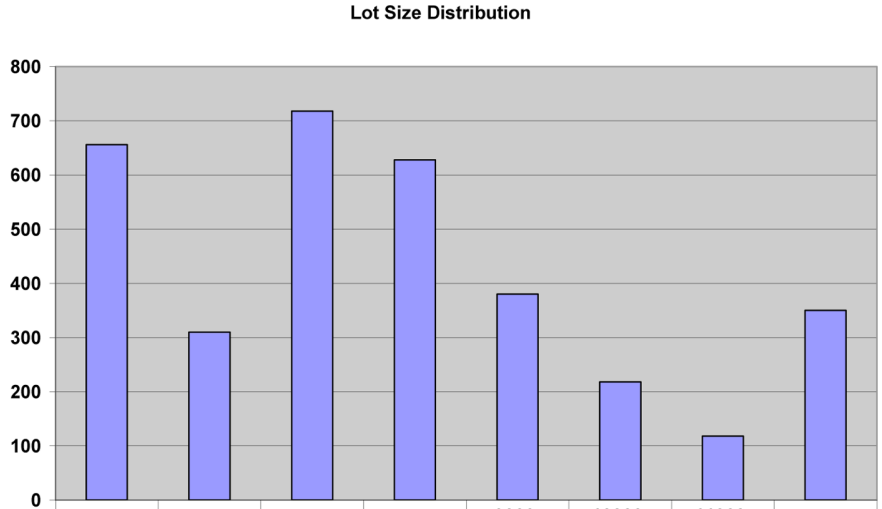
	<6000	6000-7000	7000-8000	8000-9000	9000-10000	10000-11000	11000-12000	>12000
Total	158	1831	3404	1236	702	403	310	1028

The table above provides a snapshot of existing lot sizes in the RL-1 zoning district. Just over 50% of existing lots are between 7,000 and 9,000 SF. Nearly 22% of lots do not meet the existing minimum lot size standard of 7,000 SF.

Residential - Low 2 (RL-2)

This zoning district applies to portions of neighborhoods throughout the city including several areas north of Iris Avenue and significant areas within Table Mesa, Southeast Boulder and Gunbarrel. A 6,000 SF open space requirement per dwelling unit differentiates RL-2 from other zone districts in the project area.

Many areas that are zoned RL-2 are part of master planned developments with specific development agreements that often include restrictive dimensional standards for additions and new construction. Only existing single-family properties and those RL-2 zoned areas that are not subject to specific development agreements are included in the project area for the Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods project.



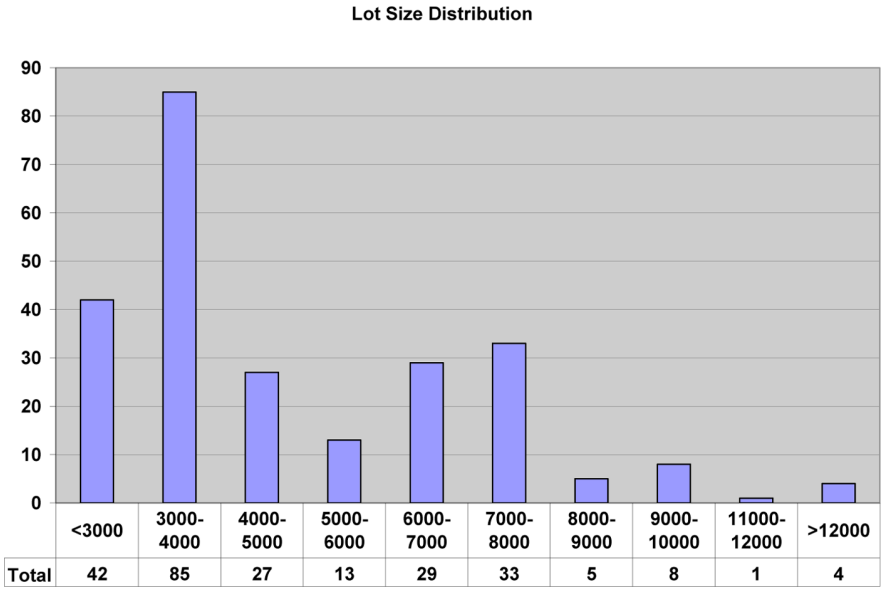
	<6000	6000-7000	7000-8000	8000-9000	9000-10000	10000-11000	11000-12000	>12000
Total	656	310	718	628	380	218	118	350

The table above provides a snapshot of existing lot sizes in the RL-2 zoning district. About 40% of existing lots are between 7,000 and 9,000 SF while close to 20% are less than 6,000 SF

Residential - Mixed 1 (RMX-1)

This zoning district applies to certain residential areas surrounding downtown Boulder, including parts of Mapleton Hill and Whittier. The district recognizes an existing mix of densities including multi-family development while protecting existing single-family properties. Some limited commercial uses may be permitted through use review. The minimum lot size is 6,000 SF.

This project will address only existing single-family properties in the RMX-1 district.

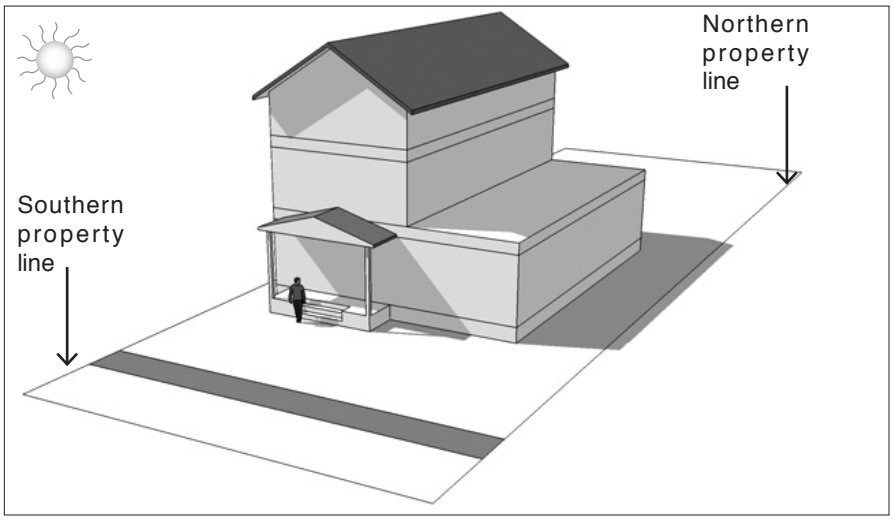


	<3000	3000-4000	4000-5000	5000-6000	6000-7000	7000-8000	8000-9000	9000-10000	11000-12000	>12000
Total	42	85	27	13	29	33	5	8	1	4

The table above provides a snapshot of existing lot sizes in the RMX zoning district. Nearly 68% of existing lots are less than 6,000 SF.

Solar Access Regulations

The city's existing solar access regulations (solar ordinance) limit the amount of shadow that a building can cast on a neighboring property. In the RR-1, RR-2, RE and RL-1 districts, the ordinance is designed to protect solar access principally for south yards, south walls, and rooftops. In the RL-2 and RMX-1 districts, the ordinance is designed to protect solar access principally for rooftops.



The city's existing solar access regulations (solar ordinance) limit the amount of shadow that a building can cast on a neighboring property. This may reduce permitted building height on the northern side of lots.

Summary of Existing Dimensional Standards by Zone District

Zone District:	RR-1	RR-2	RE	RL-1	RL-2	RMX-1
LOT DIMENSIONS						
Min. Zone Lot size	30,000 SF	30,000 SF	15,000 SF	7,000 SF	-	6,000 SF
OPEN SPACE						
Min. Open Space per Dwelling Unit	-	-	-	-	6,000 SF	600 SF
INTENSITY						
Max. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)[2]	-	-	-	0.80	-	-
Max. Lot Coverage for Accessory Structures[1]	500 SF	500 SF	500 SF	500 SF	500 SF	500 SF
SETBACKS (Primary Structure)						
Min. Front Setback[3]	25’	25’	25’	25’	20’	25’
Min. Side Setback	15’	10’	10’	5’	5’[4]	5’
Min. Rear Setback[5]	25’	25’	25’	25’	20’	25’
Min. Combined Side Setback Total	-	-	-	15’	-	-
SETBACKS (Accessory Structure)						
Min. Front Setback	55’	55’	55’	55’	55’	55’
Min. Side Setback	15’	15’	15’	10’	0’ or 3’	10’
Min. Rear Setback[6]	3’	3’	3’	3’	3’	3’
Min. Separation Between Primary and Accessory	6’	6’	6’	6’	6’	6’
SETBACKS (Parking Areas)						
Min. Front Setback for Covered/Uncovered Parking	25’	25’	25’	25’	20’	25’
HEIGHT (Primary Structure)						
Max. Height[7]	35’	35’	35’	35’	35’	35’
Max. Stories	3	3	3	3	NA	3
HEIGHT (Accessory Structure)						
Max. Height	20’	20’	20’	20’	20’	20’

“-” Indicates no requirement or that a requirement is not applicable

[1]For accessory structures located within the required rear yard setback for the primary structure with exceptions permitted in historic districts. Maximum lot coverage for accessory structures located on any part of the lot may not exceed the lot coverage of the primary structure.

[2] The ratio of built floor area to the size of the lot (a one story building covering an entire lot or a two story building covering half of a lot would both have an FAR of 1.0). FAR includes basements where more than 50% of the perimeter walls are greater than 2’ above adjacent grade. If less than 50% of the perimeter walls are greater than 2’ above grade, 50% of basement floor area is counted towards FAR. If all perimeter walls are 2’ or less above grade, no basement floor area is counted towards FAR.

[3]May be reduced if more than 50% of existing structures on the block/street face do not beet the required front setback

[4]Or 1’ per 2‘ building height, whichever is more restrictive

[5]Where a rear yard is adjacent to a street, the minimum rear setback is equal to the minimum front setback

[6]May be reduced to 0’ with common maintenance agreement. Note that a maximum 12’ wall height applies at a minimum rear setback of less than 3’

[7]As measured from the top of the roof to the lowest point on the natural grade within 25’ of the lowest exposed point on the building (for lots with less than a 20 degree slope) - Note that height standards vary for non-conforming lots.

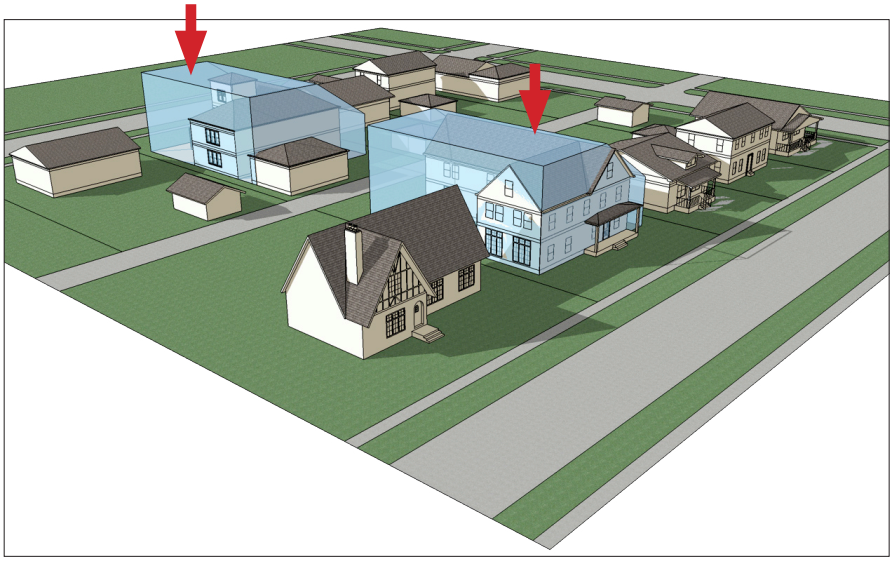
Current Trends

After years of relative stability, many established residential neighborhoods across the country have been experiencing significant changes. Within the last fifteen years, residents began to notice changes in the character of their neighborhoods. In some cases, these changes were seen as exciting opportunities. In other cases, residents worried that inappropriate changes could ruin the character of their neighborhood.

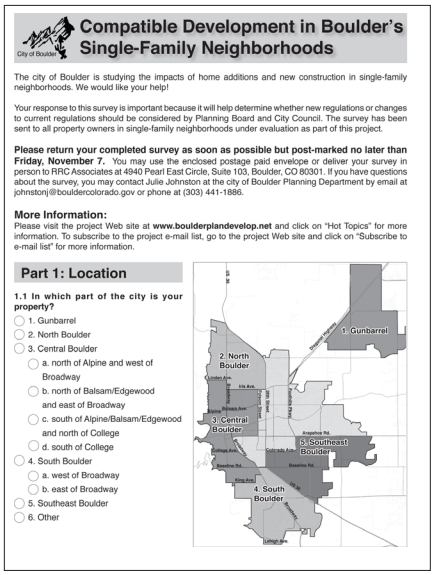
Changes such as increased house size and height of additions and new construction in established residential neighborhoods reflect current market conditions in which established neighborhoods are becoming more desirable places to live. Many buyers are seeking to maximize the square footage of their homes to justify high purchase prices and add amenities found in new construction. The resulting wave of infill housing, home expansion and renovation is contributing to a shift in the character of some neighborhoods.

Cities such as Boulder have experienced rising demand for housing and an increased pace of change. The pressure for change has been particularly acute in neighborhoods near existing amenities such as downtown or the foothills. A review of building permit activity indicates a trend towards higher building square footages and floor area ratios in most zone districts within the project area.

Although Boulder's market remains strong by comparison with the national residential real estate market, current economic conditions may slow the trend towards larger homes in established residential neighborhoods. Once the real estate market begins to improve, however, the pace of change is likely to increase once again.



New construction in many of Boulder's single-family residential neighborhoods is often larger than surrounding homes. The two homes indicated at left illustrate recent trends in a central Boulder neighborhood. The permitted building envelope defined by current regulations in the RL-1 zoning district is also shown.



Compatible Development in Boulder's Single-Family Neighborhoods

City of Boulder

The city of Boulder is studying the impacts of home additions and new construction in single-family neighborhoods. We would like your help!

Your response to this survey is important because it will help determine whether new regulations or changes to current regulations should be considered by Planning Board and City Council. The survey has been sent to all property owners in single-family neighborhoods under evaluation as part of this project.

Please return your completed survey as soon as possible but post-marked no later than Friday, November 7. You may use the enclosed postage paid envelope or deliver your survey in person to RRC Associates at 4940 Pearl East Circle, Suite 103, Boulder, CO 80301. If you have questions about the survey, you may contact Julie Johnston at the city of Boulder Planning Department by email at johnstonj@bouldercolorado.gov or phone at (303) 441-1886.

More Information:
Please visit the project Web site at **www.boulderplandevelop.net** and click on "Hot Topics" for more information. To subscribe to the project e-mail list, go to the project Web site and click on "Subscribe to e-mail list" for more information.

Part 1: Location

1.1 In which part of the city is your property?

- ○ 1. Gunbarrel
- ○ 2. North Boulder
- ○ 3. Central Boulder
  - ○ a. north of Alpine and west of Broadway
  - ○ b. north of Balsam/Edgewood and east of Broadway
  - ○ c. south of Alpine/Balsam/Edgewood and north of College
  - ○ d. south of College
- ○ 4. South Boulder
  - ○ a. west of Broadway
  - ○ b. east of Broadway
- ○ 5. Southeast Boulder
- ○ 6. Other

A public outreach effort included interactive community workshops and a survey sent to all single-family property owners in the project area. Public feedback received provides the foundation for a refined problem statement that will inform a set of recommended actions.

Part 2: Identifying The Problem

The community has struggled with issues related to the compatibility of new infill development in single-family neighborhoods for many years. Previous efforts to address neighborhood compatibility issues in the city have generated considerable controversy. Although there have been incremental changes to existing regulations, the community has not implemented a system to address neighborhood compatibility.

Past efforts to address potential issues have been criticized as too restrictive or as responding to a problem that does not exist or is very limited in scope. Prior to moving forward, the city has sought to more clearly define the problem and evaluate the potential impact of any proposed solutions. City Council adopted an initial problem definition that was followed by a public outreach effort to generate community feedback and refine the list of issues to be considered. This provides the foundation for a refined problem statement focusing on key issues that will inform a set of specific recommended actions.

Initial City Council Problem Definition

In April 2008, the Boulder City Council adopted the following initial problem definition to direct the Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods project:

"To address the impact on existing established neighborhoods of new construction and additions that are incompatible in scale and bulk with the character of the neighborhood. The impacts to be considered include without limitation: consideration of size, green space, massing and bulk planes, loss of space between houses, privacy, view sheds, lot coverage, blank walls, setbacks, height and the streetscape and visual character."

The City Council's initial problem definition provides an additional list of specific issues and considerations including:

- Homes that are overly large for their lots and neighborhoods
- Speculative homes that maximize square footage with limited setbacks
- Loss of green space
- Impacts to the visual character of neighborhoods
- Loss of mature trees, backyards and sunlight
- The loss of older homes representing the community's heritage
- Effect of the solar ordinance on the shape of buildings

City Council also adopted specific goals and objectives for any actions proposed to address the problem. These goals and objectives will be incorporated into the forthcoming recommended strategy report.

Feedback Summaries

Complete workshop, interest group and survey summaries are available on the project web site. Go to:

www.boulderplandevelop.net and click on "Hot Topics"

Participants in each of the workshops completed a series of interactive exercises and presented the results of small group discussions.

Community Feedback

The first step in the Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods project tested and refined the City Council's problem definition in consultation with members of the community. This public outreach effort sought to answer several questions:

- What is the community's response to the initial City Council problem definition?
- Are there additional issues to be addressed?
- Which issues are most and least important?
- What potential actions should be considered?
- Are there related issues and concerns that need to be acknowledged?

The public outreach effort included five workshops with over 180 total participants, two interest group sessions with 21 total participants and a property owner survey with over 3,700 participants. Members of the community also provided comments through the project web site. Each of the primary components of the public outreach effort to date are described below. Key conclusions are reflected in the refined problem statement.

Community Workshops

The project began with a community kick-off workshop followed by four neighborhood area workshops. Participants at each workshop completed a series of interactive exercises. These activities offered opportunities for individual comments and to work as teams to discuss important concepts and provide feedback. The information garnered during the workshops helped inform the contents of both the community survey and the refined problem statement described in this report.

A separate Community Workshop Summary document provides a detailed description of workshop results. Feedback provided by workshop participants is summarized below.

Agreement with the Initial Problem Definition

Many participants expressed agreement with the initial problem definition adopted by City Council at the outset of the project. Participants who did not agree with the problem statement generally noted that it either failed to mention important issues, that potential solutions would negatively impact property owners or that there was not a problem.

Concern with the Potential Impacts of New or Revised Regulations

Many participants expressed concern that the initial problem definition could lead to new or revised regulations that would be burdensome to property owners or builders and limit design flexibility.

Concern with How Final Decisions Will Be Made
A number of participants felt that residents should be allowed to vote to determine whether there was actually a problem or whether specific regulations should be enacted.

Interest in Addressing Related Community Goals and Issues
A number of participants felt that the project had been defined only to address cosmetic or aesthetic issues and hoped that broader issues and concepts could be considered. The concerns that some participants wished to address included community-wide economic goals, affordable housing, environmental sustainability and neighborhood planning.

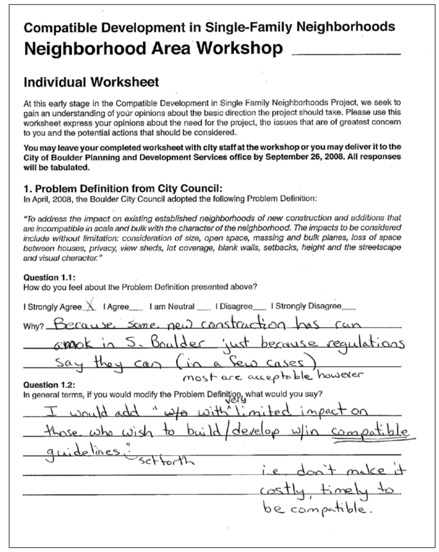
Concern that the Problem is Isolated to a Few Projects
A number of participants expressed the view that any potential problems were related to a small number of inappropriate projects and that far reaching restrictions would be an inappropriate reaction.

Identification of Specific Design Issues
Participants identified a number of specific issues that they felt were currently problematic or could become problematic with the design of new construction and additions in single-family neighborhoods. The most commonly cited issues included:

- Overly long, tall or blank walls near setbacks
- Houses that are, or appear to be, much larger than their neighbors or the surrounding context
- Loss of open space
- Accessory structures that impact alley character or have privacy and compatibility impacts on neighboring properties
- Loss of mature trees and vegetation

Concern That Existing Regulations May Produce Unintended Consequences or Lead to Undesirable Forms
Some participants cited specific issues or concerns with potential unintended consequences relating to existing regulations or processes, such as solar access regulations or the process for calculating height on sloping lots.

Concern with Changes to the Social Character of Neighborhoods and the Community
Some participants felt that the social character of their neighborhoods and, possibly the broader community, is changing in undesirable ways. In some cases, participants noted design-related issues such as overly large garage doors or lack of open space that made new houses less conducive to social interaction.



Compatible Development in Single-Family Neighborhoods
Neighborhood Area Workshop ____________

Individual Worksheet

At this early stage in the Compatible Development in Single Family Neighborhoods Project, we seek to gain an understanding of your opinions about the basic direction the project should take. Please use this worksheet express your opinions about the need for the project, the issues that are of greatest concern to you and the potential actions that should be considered.

You may leave your completed worksheet with city staff at the workshop or you may deliver it to the City of Boulder Planning and Development Services office by September 26, 2008. All responses will be tabulated.

1. Problem Definition from City Council:
In April, 2008, the Boulder City Council adopted the following Problem Definition:

"To address the impact on existing established neighborhoods of new construction and additions that are incompatible in scale and bulk with the character of the neighborhood. The impacts to be considered include without limitation: consideration of size, open space, massing and bulk planes, loss of space between houses, privacy, view sheds, lot coverage, blank walls, setbacks, height and the streetscape and visual character."

Question 1.1:
How do you feel about the Problem Definition presented above?

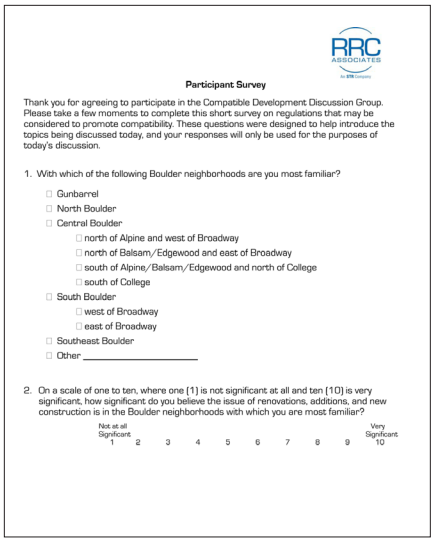
I Strongly Agree X I Agree___ I am Neutral ___ I Disagree___ I Strongly Disagree___

Why? Because some new construction has run amok in S. Boulder just because regulations say they can (in a few cases) most are acceptable however

Question 1.2:
In general terms, if you would modify the Problem Definition, what would you say?

I would add "w/o with very limited impact on those who wish to build/develop w/in compatible guidelines." set forth i.e. don't make it costly, timely to be compatible.

Workshop participants provided feedback using both an individual worksheet and poster-size group worksheets.



RRC ASSOCIATES

Participant Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Compatible Development Discussion Group. Please take a few moments to complete this short survey on regulations that may be considered to promote compatibility. These questions were designed to help introduce the topics being discussed today, and your responses will only be used for the purposes of today's discussion.

1. With which of the following Boulder neighborhoods are you most familiar?
   - ☐ Gunbarrel
   - ☐ North Boulder
   - ☐ Central Boulder
     - ☐ north of Alpine and west of Broadway
     - ☐ north of Balsam/Edgewood and east of Broadway
     - ☐ south of Alpine/Balsam/Edgewood and north of College
     - ☐ south of College
   - ☐ South Boulder
     - ☐ west of Broadway
     - ☐ east of Broadway
   - ☐ Southeast Boulder
   - ☐ Other _____

2. On a scale of one to ten, where one (1) is not significant at all and ten (10) is very significant, how significant do you believe the issue of renovations, additions, and new construction is in the Boulder neighborhoods with which you are most familiar?

Not at all Significant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very Significant 10

Interest group participants completed a brief survey prior to the group discussion.

Interest Groups

The community workshops were followed by two special sessions that provided a diverse selection of participants with the opportunity to have a more in-depth discussion of potential issues and solutions. The groups included members from local organizations, professionals in the field of single-family development, and neighborhood representatives.

A separate Interest Group Summary document provides a detailed description of the two discussion sessions. Overall themes are summarized below.

Support for Strategies that Recognize Context and Preserve Flexibility

Many participants noted that "one size does not fit all" and expressed the need for flexibility in any proposed regulations. Discussion focused on potential issues with non-conforming lots and differing neighborhood conditions.

Concern Regarding Large, Long and/or Featureless Walls at or Near the Side Setback

Participants in both groups indicated that the character of a building's side walls could have aesthetic or privacy impacts on neighbors.

Interest in Preserving Mature Vegetation or Landscaping

Some participants were concerned with the loss of mature vegetation or landscaping that could occur with additions or new construction.

A Desire to Review or Streamline Existing Regulations

Many participants felt that some of the unintended consequences of existing regulations, including the solar access ordinance and height measurement system, made them worth reviewing.

Concern that the Project is Responding to a Problem That Does Not Exist

A number of participants, especially those in the first discussion group, felt that the project represented a "solution in search of a problem."

Concern Regarding the Possibility of New Regulations

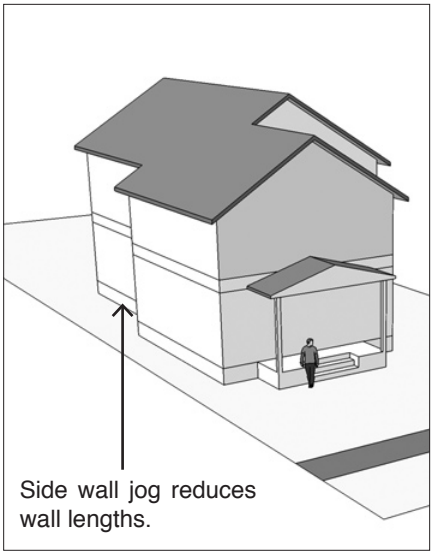
While participants expressed concerns about the impacts of incompatible development on their neighborhoods, many were also concerned that the project could lead to additional regulations and bureaucracy.

A Desire to Allow for Increased Density

Several participants spoke of the need to increase population densities to address sustainability or affordable housing goals. In some cases, they hoped to see greater flexibility for duplex, multi-family or carriage house development within primarily single-family neighborhoods.

Community Survey

To facilitate a broader range of public feedback, a survey was mailed to all single-family property owners in the project area. The survey asked participants to provide feedback on the City Council's initial problem definition and a series of statements reflecting feedback heard during the community workshops. It included questions regarding potential actions and tools and presented a series of alternative development scenarios to generate feedback on compatible development options. Additional demographic and geographic questions were also included to help determine how responses vary for different parts of the city (as shown on the map below) and by age, income, experience and other characteristics of survey participants.

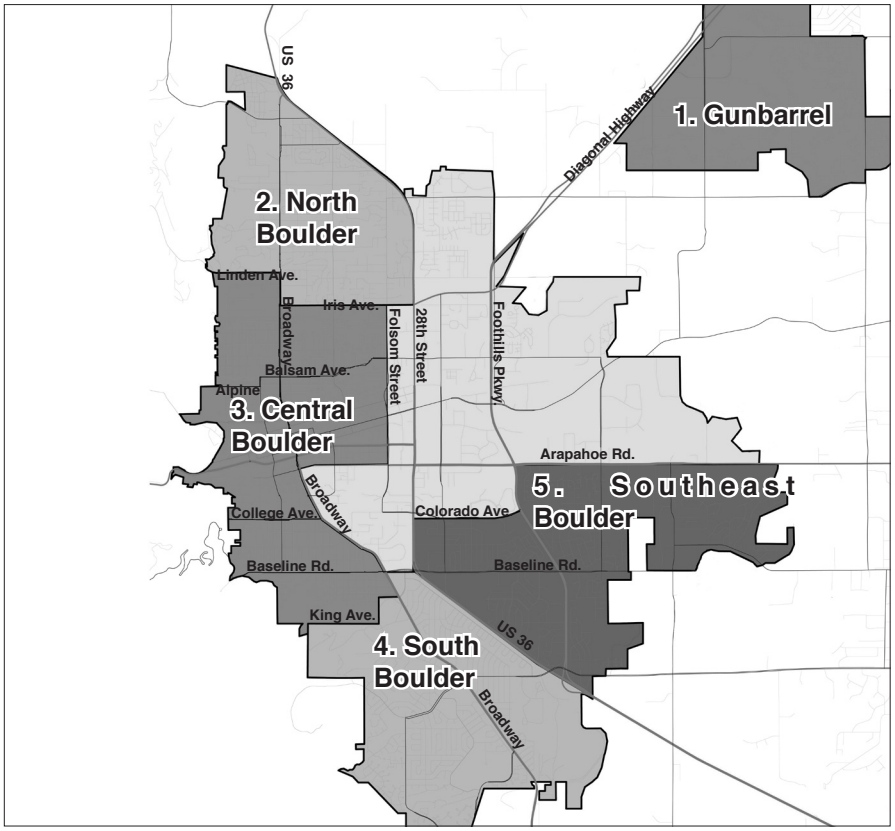


The survey included questions to generate feedback on how different design variables affect the compatibility of development in single-family neighborhoods.

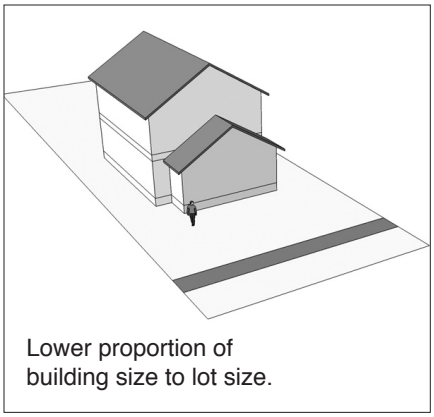
Of just over 12,000 surveys sent, 33% were returned. A separate report provides an in-depth summary of survey responses, with a series of detailed charts and graphs. The summary of survey responses below includes only those overall themes that were used to develop the refined problem statement.

Agreement with the Initial Problem Definition

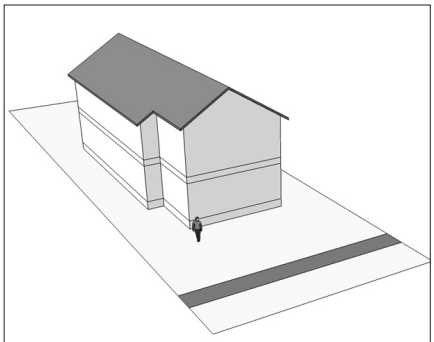
About 65% of survey participants expressed agreement with the City Council's initial problem definition (20% strongly agreed), 14% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 21% disagreed (9% strongly disagreed). Gunbarrel was the only area where most participants did not express overall agreement with the initial problem definition. Agreement was highest in Central Boulder.



The survey asked participants to choose one of five areas in Boulder to indicate where their house is located. Participants could also choose one of four subareas if their house was located in Central Boulder and one of two subareas if their house was located in South Boulder.



Lower proportion of building size to lot size.



Higher proportion of building size to lot size.

A majority of survey participants agreed that requirements should be set to relate the size of a building to the size of its lot.

A Feeling That New Construction and Additions Are Not Having Overall Negative Impact on Neighborhoods

Although survey participants expressed general agreement with the initial problem definition, only 30% agreed that the character of their neighborhoods was being negatively impacted by recent construction (13% strongly agreed) while 15% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 55% disagreed (26% strongly disagreed).

Participants from Central Boulder were more likely to agree that recent construction was an issue in their neighborhoods with 52% expressing agreement (31% strongly agreed), 11% not indicating particular agreement or disagreement and 37% expressing disagreement (16% strongly disagreed).

Support for Requirements that Relate House Size to Lot Size

About 67% of survey participants agreed that requirements should be set to relate the size of a building to the size of its lot (26% strongly agreed), 13% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 21% disagreed (9% strongly disagreed). Gunbarrel was the only part of the city where most participants did not express overall agreement. The level of agreement was very similar throughout other parts of the city.

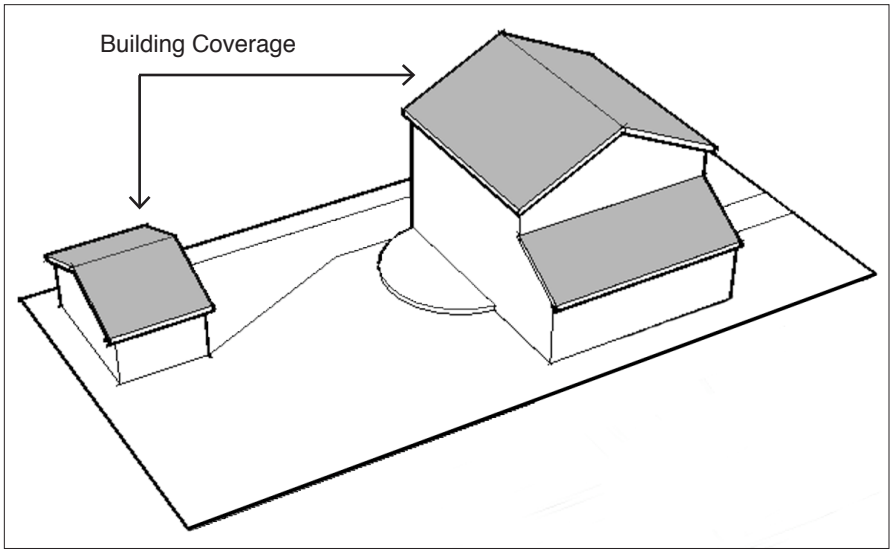
Although there was agreement that house size should be related to lot size, it is important to note that only 43% of survey participants agreed that some recent construction in their neighborhoods was too large (21% strongly agreed) while 13% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 45% disagreed (21% strongly disagreed). In addition, 42% of survey participants agreed that bigger houses could fit in if they are well designed (22% strongly agreed) while 17% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 20% disagreed (5% strongly disagreed).

Concern With Building Coverage and a Possible Loss of Open Space or Mature Trees or Vegetation

About 56% of survey participants agreed that a limit on the percentage of building coverage on a lot should be considered (18% strongly agreed), 17% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 21% disagreed (11% strongly disagreed). Agreement was highest in Central Boulder and North Boulder.

51% of survey participants agreed that the loss of mature vegetation when new construction occurs is a key issue (16% strongly agreed), 17% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 32% disagreed (12% "strongly disagreed"). Agreement was highest in Central Boulder.

Although there was agreement that a limit on the percentage of building coverage should be considered, it is important to note that only 49% of survey participants agreed that the loss of green space when new buildings are constructed is a key issue (18% strongly agreed) while 15% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 37% disagreed (16% strongly disagreed).



A majority of survey participants agreed that a limit on the percentage of building coverage on a lot should be considered.

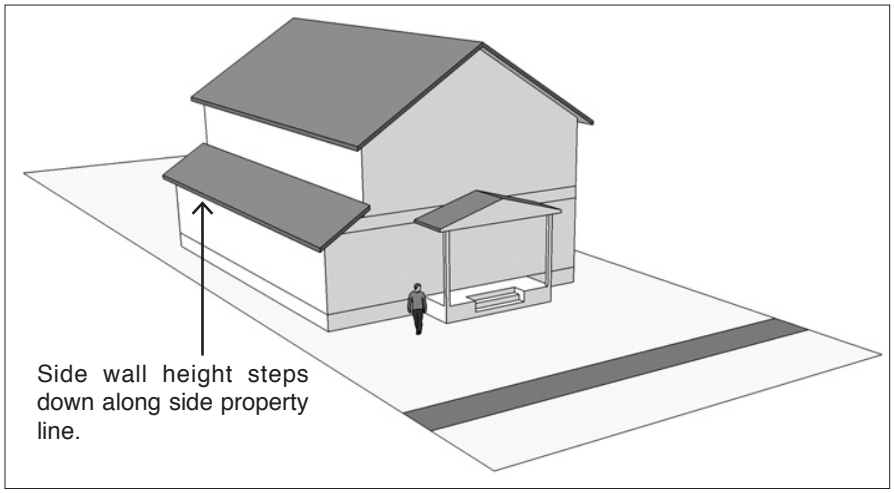
Concern With Potential Privacy Impacts of New Construction and Additions and Support for Requirements Related to Side Walls
About 62% of survey participants agreed a large house next door diminishes privacy in others' back yards (26% strongly agreed), 12% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 26% disagreed (9% strongly disagreed). Agreement was highest in Central Boulder and North Boulder.

Survey participant support for side wall height requirements may be related to privacy concerns. About 56% of survey participants agreed that wall height limits should be lower near the side property line (16% strongly agreed), 19% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 24% disagreed (10% strongly disagreed). Agreement was highest in Central Boulder and North Boulder.

Large featureless walls along the side of a building were a less pronounced concern for survey participants. However, 50% agreed that they could be an issue (16% strongly agreed), 20% did not indicate particular agreement or disagreement and 28% disagreed (10% strongly disagreed).

Support for Making Changes to Existing Regulations
Most survey participants felt that some action should be taken to address the compatibility of development in single-family neighborhoods or to streamline existing regulations. Only 12% of survey participants said that no changes should be made to existing regulations while 59% said that existing zoning standards should be changed to mitigate the impact of larger buildings either throughout the city's single-family zone districts or only in certain targeted areas.

Many survey participants also supported streamlining existing regulations (30%), providing additional flexibility for special conditions (35%) and establishing a review and approval process tailored to individual neighborhoods (41%).



A majority of survey participants agreed that wall height limits should be lower near the side property line.

Refined Problem Statement

City Council's initial problem definition guided the first step in the project including extensive public outreach to more clearly define the issues that the community seeks to address. Public feedback was used to refine Council's problem definition as an interim step. The following refined problem statement will guide the remaining steps in the project including a recommended strategy to promote compatible development in single-family neighborhoods:

The problem is new single-family construction and additions that are viewed as being incompatible with adjacent homes and the surrounding neighborhood in three key respects:

- *They are overly large in relation to their lots*
- *They are negatively impact the privacy of neighboring lots*
- *They cover too much of their lots or result in a loss of mature trees or vegetation*

Community feedback received during the project's first step provides the foundation for the refined problem statement.

The project's next steps will include workshops and other opportunities for community members to provide feedback on the recommended strategy.

Next Steps

The refined problem statement will help direct a set of recommended actions to be described in the forthcoming strategy report. It will be important to ensure that any revised regulations drafted to support the problem statement are carefully integrated into existing regulations. Where feasible, existing regulations should also be simplified or streamlined so that they are easier to use and do not create unnecessary barriers for homeowners or for architects and builders who are engaged in compatible development projects in single-family neighborhoods.

The strategy will incorporate the following goals and objectives adopted by City Council:

- It is very important to retain flexibility for people to alter their homes as their needs change, since many can't afford to move to another house. However, there is a threshold of pops over which these additions can be "too much." It is important to provide for appropriate change over time.
- Ensure that solutions promote variety as opposed to monotony.
- Ensure that all neighborhoods or certain lots with characteristics different from one another are treated fairly and equitably.
- Include an efficient process to address unintended consequences (an appeal or variance process).
- Include analysis of broad economic impacts.

The strategy report will link City Council's goals and objectives to specific recommended strategies to address the refined problem statement. The forthcoming economics report will provide a broad economic analysis and discuss economic considerations related to the recommended strategy.

Related Issues

The problem statement reflects only those issues that have been identified with the character of development in single-family neighborhoods. Related problems and issues identified by members of the community will be discussed in the strategy report.